

A photograph of a pond with several lily pads floating on the water. A single white lily flower is in bloom on the right side. The water is dark and reflects the surrounding environment. A green rounded rectangle is overlaid on the image, containing the title text.

On The Water: Floating Aquatic Plants

FLOATING HEART *Nymphoides cordata*

- 🌿 **Status:** Native
- 🌿 **Habitat:** Lakes, ponds, slow-moving streams and rivers.
- 🌿 **Stem:** Round in cross section.
- 🌿 **Leaves:** Small, heart-shaped, reddish to purple. Approximately 1 – 1 ½ inches wide.
- 🌿 **Flower:** Small, white, 5 petals.
- 🌿 **Flowering Period:** Mid-summer.
- 🌿 **Similar Species:** The leaves are often confused with those of the yellow water lily but are only about the size of a half-dollar, and the shape resembles a heart, with the same soft V-shape of the yellow water lily. Floating heart has a small white flower that can be found in mid-summer; yellow water lily has a large yellow flower that blooms most of the summer. (Smagula and Connor, 2007)



WATERSHIELD *Brasenia schreberi*



- ✿ **Status:** Native
- ✿ **Habitat:** Lakes, ponds, slow-moving streams and rivers.
- ✿ **Stem:** Round in cross section. Attached to the center of the underside of the leaf.
- ✿ **Leaves:** Oval. Undersides are dark pink. Leaves approximately 4 inches wide. Underside of the leaves and stem have a jelly-like coating that protects them from being eaten by insects.
- ✿ **Flower:** Small, dark pink to purple, 6 petals.
- ✿ **Flowering Period:** July.
- ✿ **Similar Species:** Resembles the leaves of the water lily as well as those of floating heart.



WHITE WATER LILY *Nymphaea odorata*



- ✿ **Status:** Native
- ✿ **Habitat:** Lakes, ponds, slow-moving streams and rivers.
- ✿ **Stem:** Round in cross section, attached to the center of the underside of the leaf.
- ✿ **Leaves:** Round with a V-shaped notch on one side. Up to 12 inches wide.
- ✿ **Flower:** Large, white, sweet-smelling. Up to 4 inches wide.
- ✿ **Flowering Period:** June - September
- ✿ **Similar Species:** White water lily can be distinguished from the yellow water lily and floating heart by the V-shaped notch near the stem attachment and the more rounded shape of the leaf.

Both the yellow water lily and floating heart have a more rounded heart-shaped notch. Yellow water lily leaves are much more oval than the white water lily, which has a circular leaf. Floating heart leaves are no more than a few inches in length. (Smagula and Connor, 2007)





YELLOW WATER LILY *Nuphar variegata*

- ✿ **Status:** Native
- ✿ **Habitat:** Lakes, ponds, slow-moving streams and rivers.
- ✿ **Stem:** Triangular in cross section, attached to the lobed end of the underside of the leaf.
- ✿ **Leaves:** Giant, floating. Up to 12 to 15 inches wide.
- ✿ **Flower:** Yellow flower petals appear cupped around the inner flower parts and do not open completely like those of the white water lily.
- ✿ **Flowering Period:** June – September
- ✿ **Similar Species:** Often confused with floating heart and white water lily though floating heart is much smaller in leaf length and width. The white water lily also has a much more rounded leaf with a sharp V-shaped notch. (Smagula and Connor, 2007)



DUCKWEED

Lemna spp.



- ✿ **Status:** Native
 - ✿ **Habitat:** Surfaces of some lakes, ponds, slow-moving streams and rivers and often in stagnant waters of wetland areas.
 - ✿ **Stem:** No true stems.
 - ✿ **Leaves:** This plant has no true leaves or stems and only has a flat, green plant body called a thallus. They are very small, only about 1/16 of an inch wide. (Smagula and Connor, 2007)
- Duckweeds blanket the water surface in colonies. There may be one or more roots hanging into the water, but the plant is free-floating.
- ✿ **Flower:** This plant rarely flowers.
 - ✿ **Similar Species:** Many people think that dense growths of duckweed resemble an algae bloom. (Smagula and Connor, 2007)

WATERMEAL

Wolffia spp.

- ✿ **Status:** Native
- ✿ **Habitat:** Lakes, ponds, slow-moving streams and rivers.
- ✿ **Stem:** No true stems.
- ✿ **Leaves:** Elliptical and flat.
- ✿ **Flower:** This plant rarely flowers but is considered the world's smallest flowering plant.
- ✿ **Similar Species:** Unlike duckweed, this plant completely lacks roots and must be inspected closely to detect this difference. Watermeal may also resemble an algae bloom, but can be distinguished by simply touching the water's surface to see if tiny plants are stuck to your fingers (watermeal) or if the water has a slimy film (algae). It is commonly found growing along with duckweed. (Smagula and Connor, 2007)



Photo courtesy of Amy Smagula

